

VZCZCXR02102

PP RUEHBZ RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO

DE RUEHDS #0388/01 0551411

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 241411Z FEB 10

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7895

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint Staff WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 8085

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000388

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/RSA, AF/E AND IO/UNP

NSC FOR MGAVIN

PARIS FOR WBAIN AND RKANEDA

LONDON FOR PLORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2020

TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS PTER SO UN AU

SUBJECT: USAU: AFRICAN UNION STRUGGLES WITH AMISOM MEDIA CAMPAIGN

REF: ADDIS ABABA 342

Classified By: USAU CDA Joel Maybury, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Seconded UN Public Information Officer (PIO) reveals a "complete blockage" of African Union strategic communications efforts on the eve of a major planned offensive by African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, and blames the Office of the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission (SRCC) for failing to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that would release up to \$22 million to support AMISOM's media campaign. She also identifies strategic communications needs of the TFG that cannot be satisfied by the UN and recommends support by the AMISOM PIO and the Nairobi-based Military Information Support Team (MIST) to address these shortfalls. End Summary.

¶2. (C) United Nations PIO Seraphine Toe (protect accordingly), who is seconded to the African Union Commission to provide support to AMISOM, reported to USAU Military Adviser on February 24 that, despite desperate pleas from the Force Commander, AMISOM's media campaign is stalled for want of a signature. Toe stated that the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) has hired two expatriate media experts and a staff of 10 Somalis to develop programming for AMISOM radio stations (one each provided by the USG and the UN). UNSOA reportedly has \$22 million set aside to pay staff, lease office space, hire technical experts, and produce radio messages from a remote location in Nairobi for transmission in Mogadishu. The UN has offered to assume operational costs for both its transmitter and the broadcast station provided by the USG.

¶3. (C) Per Toe, all that is lacking to operationalize UNSOA's radio programming unit and the two radio stations is the SRCC's signature on a MOU with UNSOA. Toe claims that this MOU was submitted months ago to the previous SRCC Nicholas Bwakira, but that bad advice from the SRCC's only PIO caused Bwakira to demure. Toe states that newly-appointed SRCC Boubacar Diarra is aware of UNSOA's offer and is reviewing the MOU. Toe was worried, however, because Diarra does not seem to realize the urgency of the matter and because he is being advised by the same inept PIO.

¶4. (C) Toe proffered the following recommendations and asked that they be reinforced by USAU Ambassador Battle and the Nairobi-based Somalia Unit:

- Ensure SRCC Diarra understands the urgency of a strategic communications plan and its linkage to the planned AMISOM-TFG offensive;
- Recommend timely review and signature of the MOU to unlock UNSOA funding that would allow two AMISOM transmitters to begin broadcasting;
- Encourage the SRCC to pressure the AU's Human Resources Department to hire an additional PIO for the SRCC's Office and fill the PIO vacancy in the AU's Peace Support Operations Division; and
- Use non-UNSOA resources to help the TFG develop its own media campaign plan and train Somali PIOs and radio broadcasters.

¶5. (C) Toe reported that her conversations with the Somali Minister of Information suggest that the TFG has no strategic communication plan and is routinely missing opportunities to showcase TFG progress and denounce al-Shabaab activity in an effort to drive a wedge between the foreign extremists and the Somali populace. She lamented the fact that UNSOA has no mandate to directly assist the TFG in developing a media campaign and operating Radio Mogadishu, the only functional FM radio station that is not influenced by the extremists. Toe suggested the following solutions:

- Provide UNSOA training in message development to AMISOM Spokesperson Felix Kulaiyge which he could impart to his TFG counterparts in Mogadishu; and
- Use the Nairobi-based MIST to directly engage the TFG Ministry of Information to develop a strategic communication plan, radio messaging, and to exploit other media (e.g.

ADDIS ABAB 00000388 002 OF 002

Internet, TFG website, and SMS text messaging). (Note: USAU understands that, unlike UNSOA, the Nairobi MIST has the authority to engage the TFG directly, although this may necessitate additional program funding and would require that all MIST-developed products be approved by US Special Operations Command before being used in support of TFG. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Comment: Toe is a faithful USAU interlocutor and a competent PIO. Being seconded from the UN to the AU with no counterpart in the Peace Support Operations Division, however, she feels her influence at AU headquarters is limited. She has lost faith in her PIO counterpart based in the SRCC's Office in Nairobi, and is nervous about circumventing him or pushing the new SRCC too hard. But she also knows how broken both AMISOM and the TFG are in terms of strategic communications and would like to see improvement before any major AMISOM-TFG offensive in Mogadishu. End Comment.

MUSHINGI